

February 19, 2010

**In Support of the Youth PROMISE Act
H.R. 1064 and S. 435**

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned, representing a broad array of children and youth-oriented specialties including juvenile justice, mental health, civil rights, education, youth work, legal services, and faith communities, respectfully express our strong support for the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (“Youth PROMISE Act”), bi-partisan and bi-cameral legislation sponsored by Representatives Robert C. “Bobby” Scott and Michael Castle (H.R. 1064) and Senators Robert Casey and Olympia Snowe (S. 435).

Rather than creating additional and duplicative punitive approaches, the Youth PROMISE Act builds upon evidence-based and promising practices proven to reduce youth violence and delinquency. Specifically, the Youth PROMISE Act directs resources towards communities facing an increased risk of crime and gang activity in order to enable those communities to begin to address significant unmet needs and prevent crime from occurring. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, communities facing the greatest youth gang, delinquency and crime challenges will come together – via a local council that includes law enforcement, community-based organizations, schools, faith organizations, health, social services, and mental health providers – to develop and implement a comprehensive local plan to support young people and their families and make our communities safer, reduce victimization, and help at-risk young people to lead law-abiding and healthy lives, free from gangs, delinquency and/or criminal involvement.

The Youth PROMISE Act provides for thorough evaluation, including analyses of the cost-savings to society yielded by investing in prevention and intervention rather than in more costly and ineffective prosecution and incarceration. Under the Youth PROMISE Act, savings from investments in prevention and intervention programs will be reinvested in prevention and intervention efforts funded under the Act.

The Youth PROMISE Act also provides for the hiring and training of Youth Oriented Policing Services (YOPS) officers to prevent and address juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang activity in a manner that is responsive to the research on juveniles and adolescent brain development. The Act’s Center for Youth Oriented Policing will be responsible for identification, development and dissemination of information related to strategic policing practices and technologies to law enforcement agencies, specifically related to the needs of young people. Additionally, the Act includes support for youth victim and witness protection programs, which are critical to deter crime.

Finally, the Youth PROMISE Act provides for the increased local coordination of federal programs designed to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency and youth crime, and establishes a federal commission charged to carry out a nationwide, comprehensive study of the effectiveness of crime and delinquency prevention and intervention strategies.

In short, the approach of the Youth PROMISE Act makes sense, comports with the research on adolescent brain development and crime and violence prevention and intervention, and will yield overall savings to the community, according to both financial and life quality measures. For all of these reasons, we urge your support for H.R. 1064 and S. 435, the Youth PROMISE Act.

Please feel free to contact the Chairs of the Gang and Youth Violence Prevention Task Force of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition with any questions: Tara Andrews at the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 202-467-0864, ext. 109; Jennifer Bellamy at the American Civil Liberties Union, 202-715-0828; or Corryne Deliberto at World Vision, 202-572-6553.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

International Organizations (7)

Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), International
Continental Societies, Incorporated
Covenant House International
Human Rights Watch
International Community Corrections Association
Penal Reform International
World Vision

National Organizations (119)

Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
American Bar Association
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American Correctional Association
American Council of Chief Defenders
American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
American Jewish Congress
American Probation and Parole Association
American Psychological Association
Asian American Justice Center
ASPIRA, Inc.
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Boy Scouts of America
Boys and Girls Clubs of America
Campaign for Youth Justice
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Children's Law and Policy
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Coalition on Human Needs
Correctional Education Association
Council for Educators of At-Risk and Delinquent Youth
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA)
Family Justice
Federal CURE
First Five Years Fund
Girls Inc.
Immigrant Justice Network
Institute for Community Peace
Justice Policy Institute

Juvenile Justice Trainers Association
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of Young Voters
Legal Action Center
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office
Mental Health America
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National African-American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Alliance for Faith and Justice
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Juvenile Correctional Agencies
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO)
National Black Police Association
National Center for Youth Law
National Consortium of TASC (Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities) Programs
National Council for Community Behavioral Health
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
National Council on Educating Black Children
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)
National Council for Urban (Gang) Peace, Justice and Empowerment
National Education Association
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Head Start Association
National Hire Network
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Juvenile Defender Center
National Juvenile Detention Association
National Juvenile Justice Network
National Network for Youth
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement (NOBLE)
National Organization of Concerned Black Men, Inc.
National Partnership for Juvenile Services
National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
National Trust for the Development of African-American Men
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Open Society Policy Center
The Peace Alliance
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office
Prison Legal News
Prisons Foundation
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

Southern Poverty Law Center
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Law and Policy Section
The Rebecca Project for Human Rights
The School Social Work Association of America
The Sentencing Project
The Student Peace Alliance
Therapeutic Communities of America (TCA)
Time Dollar Youth Court
TimeBanks USA
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United Neighborhood Centers of America
U.S. Conference of Mayors
U.S. Dream Academy
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)
VOICES for America's Children
W. Haywood Burns Institute
Washington Office on Latin America
Youth Law Center
Youth Matter America

State and Local Organizations (114)

ACLU of Illinois (IL)
ACLU of North Carolina (NC)
ACLU of Ohio (OH)
Action for Children North Carolina (NC)
Advocates for Children and Youth (MD)
Alabama Youth Justice Coalition (AL)
Alston Wilkes Society (SC)
Alturas Mas Altas (CA)
Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Office of Restorative Justice (CA)
Asian Law Caucus (CA)
ATTIC Correctional Services, Inc. (WI)
Barrios Unidos – Santa Cruz Chapter (CA)
Barrios Unidos – Virginia Chapter (VA)
CASA of Maryland, Inc. (MD)
Center for Community Alternatives (NY)
Central American Legal Assistance (NY)
Chicago Area Project (IL)
Children's Action Alliance (AZ)
Children's Campaign, Inc. (FL)
Citizens for Juvenile Justice (MA)
City of New York Department of Juvenile Justice (NY)
Columbia Heights Shaw Family Collaborative (DC)
Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CT)
Contra Costa County Public Defender's Office (CA)
Correctional Association of New York (NY)
Council for Children's Rights (NC)
DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DC)

DC NAACP Youth Council (DC)
Delaware Center for Justice (DE)
Equal Justice Initiative (AL)
Everychild Foundation (CA)
Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY) (DC)
Faith Communities for Families and Children (CA)
Families & Allies of Virginia's Youth (VA)
Families & Friends of La.'s Incarcerated Children (LA)
Families Moving Forward (CT)
Florida Public Defender Association, Inc. (FL)
Florida Public Defender, Fourth Judicial Circuit (FL)
Florida Families for Fair Sentences (FL)
Franklin County Public Defender (OH)
Fusion Partnerships, Inc. (MD)
Hispanic Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program (OH)
Homies Unidos (CA)
H.O.P.E., Inc (KS)
Identity, Inc. (MD)
The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence (RI)
John Howard Association of Illinois (IL)
JustChildren (VA)
Justice for DC Youth (DC)
Juvenile Court Judges of California (CA)
Juvenile Justice Center of Suffolk University Law School (NY)
Juvenile Justice Coalition (OH)
Juvenile Justice Initiative of Illinois (IL)
Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (LA)
Kansas CURE (KS)
Keeping Our Kids Safe: The Newport News Violence Prevention Network (VA)
L.A. Unified School District (CA)
L.A. Youth Justice Coalition (CA)
Latin American Youth Center (DC)
Leaders in Community Alternatives, Inc. (CA)
Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Inc. (DC)
Law Office of Anthony J. Keber (MA)
Maryland CURE
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (MD)
Maryland Juvenile Justice Coalition (MD)
Maryland Office of the Public Defender (MD)
Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania (PA)
Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MI)
Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center, Juvenile Law and Policy Clinic,
University of Richmond School of Law (VA)
Midwest Juvenile Defender Center (IL)
Minnesota Juvenile Justice Coalition (MN)
Mississippi CURE (MS)
Mississippi Youth Justice Project (MS)
New Hampshire Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NH)
New Jersey Association on Correction (NJ)
New Mexico Council on Crime and Delinquency (NM)
New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (NM)

Pacific Juvenile Defender Center (CA)
Parents Who Care Coalition (SD)
Parents, Youth, Children and Family Training Institute (AL)
Partnership for Safety and Justice (OR)
Peace in the Hood (OH)
Puerto Rico Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (PR)
Public Justice Center (MD)
PTA of Illinois (IL)
Quad A For KIDS / A Rochester Area Community Foundation Initiative (NY)
Southern Juvenile Defender Center (AL)
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TX)
The Center for Community Development, Inc. (VA)
The Fortune Society (NY)
The Law Offices of Public Defender Bennett H. Brummer
(Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office) (FL)
The Pendulum Foundation (CO)
The Poor People's Alliance, Connecticut Chapter (CT)
San Francisco Youth Commission (CA)
The S.T.O.P. Family Investment Center at Oakmont North (VA)
Southern Juvenile Defender Center (AL)
Southern Poverty Law Center (AL)
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TN)
UNC Juvenile Justice Clinic, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law (NC)
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries (OH)
United in Peace, Inc. (IL)
Utah Commission on Criminal Justice and Juvenile Justice (UT)
Virginia Coalition for Juvenile Justice (VA)
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education (VA)
Virginia Commonwealth University Center for School-Community Collaboration (VA)
Virginia CURE (VA)
VOICES for Alabama's Children (AL)
VOICES for Children in Nebraska (NE)
VOICES for Ohio's Children (OH)
Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (WA)
Washington Defender Association (WA)
Washington Defender Association's Immigration Project (WA)
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (PA)
Youth Advocacy Project of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (MA)
Young America Works Public Charter School (DC)

Local Jurisdictions (12)

City of East Cleveland (OH)
City of Hampton (VA)
City of Los Angeles (CA)
City of New York (NY)
City of Newport News (VA)
City of Norfolk (VA)
City of Pasadena (CA)
City of Philadelphia (PA)
City of Pittsburgh (PA)
City of Portsmouth (VA)

City of Richmond (VA)
City and County of San Francisco (CA)
County of Santa Fe (NM)

Elected Officials and Academics (10)

Leroy D. Baca, Sheriff, County of Los Angeles (CA)
Donna M. Bishop, Northeastern University (MA)
Susan J. Carstens, Psy.D., L.P. Juvenile Specialist, Crystal Police Dept. (MN)
The Honorable Toni Harp, Connecticut State Senator
The Honorable Alice L. Bordsen, North Carolina State Representatives
Jolanta Juskiewicz, Ph.D., American University (D.C.)
The Honorable Kelvin Roldán, Connecticut State Representative
Tony Roshan Samara, George Mason University (VA)
Earle Williams, Psy.D. Hampton University, (VA)
Aaron Kupchik, Ph.D., University of Delaware